

HAUSER & WIRTH

Press Release

JUDD, LEWITT AND BILL MADE BY LEHNI

Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Bahnhofstrasse
14 November 2024 – 22 February 2025



About the exhibition

This November, Hauser & Wirth Zurich, Bahnhofstrasse, brings together an exhibition showcasing a selection of Lehni's unique collaborations with renowned artists that resulted in exceptional artworks and furniture. Artistic partnerships have been an integral part of the Swiss metal furniture company's history for more than a century and they are a focal point of their ongoing commitment to crafting products of outstanding quality, sustainability and design. A selection of furniture by artist Donald Judd will be on display, alongside works by Swiss artist Max Bill, as well as sculptures by Sol LeWitt. The exhibition will also highlight a series of artists' portraits by Doris Lehni-Quarella, a trained photographer who helmed the company in the 1980s and '90s.

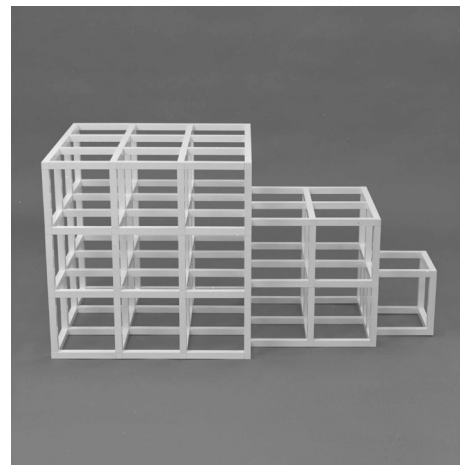
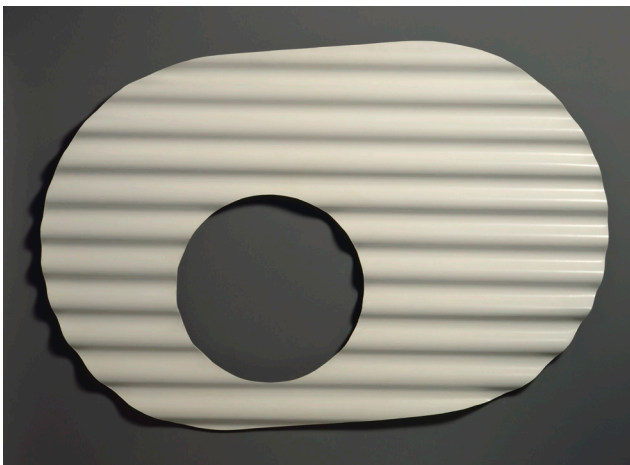
Founded in Zurich in 1922 by Rudolf Lehni (1885–1956) as a sheet metal workshop, situated in close proximity to the Kunsthaus Zurich, Lehni cultivated contacts with the artistic avant-garde and his workshop would become a meeting point for many artists. Lehni soon became the artist's collaborator, bringing expertise in metalwork to the creative vision of the artist. One of the first standout partnerships was with the internationally renowned artist Max Bill, who commissioned Lehni to make his famous 'well-relief' in 1932. This pioneering work is viewed as particularly important since it anticipated American minimal art and Arte Povera. Although Bill would never design for the company, his influence played an important role in the company's development from sheet metal workshop to furniture manufacturer.

The industrial manufacturing expanded when Rudolf Lehni Jr. (1927 – 1981) took over the company management. A new bending technique for sheet metal made the company well-known in architectural circles. Alongside managing the company, Lehni Jr. also taught material science and metalworking at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts) in Zurich, where he crossed paths with Andreas Christen (1936 – 2006),

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who would come to design the majority of the Lehni furniture collection over the following four decades. Under Max Bill's guidance, Christen and Lehni would conceive the famous 'Aluminium Shelf' that was created for the 1964 Expo (Swiss National Exhibition) in Lausanne and was subsequently added to the collection.

In the 1970s, furniture manufacturing became a focal point for the company and close ties with the Zurich art scene saw new collaborations with artists. The Annemarie Verna Gallery in Zurich, one of the leading galleries for contemporary art in Switzerland, played an important role in introducing international artists to the Swiss metal experts. American Sol LeWitt (1928 – 2007), a pioneer and one of the founders of minimal and conceptual art who gained early recognition in Switzerland through his ties to the Zurich school of concrete artists, realised metal versions of the sculpture series 'Structure' (1978) and 'Cube' (1985).



After Rudolf Lehni's untimely death in 1981, his wife Doris Lehni-Quarella (1944 – 1998) took over the company's management and visionary lead. A photographic artist in her own right, her photography would capture and document the company's products in striking images. She continued to expand the Lehni furniture collection in collaboration with Andreas Christen and continued to forge close relationships with contemporary artists and designers.

Donald Judd, one of the most significant and radical artists of the 20th Century, was introduced to Lehni-Quarella via their mutual friends Annemarie and Gianfranco Verna. Judd was in Switzerland to produce a commissioned work for the 'Sculpture in the 20th Century' exhibition in Basel's Merian Park curated by Martin Schwander. He was impressed by the high level of craftsmanship and manufacturing precision of the Christen / Lehni bookshelf standing in Annemarie Verna Gallery. Judd would set up a workplace at the Lehni factory for several weeks, working in close cooperation with metal work specialists and craftsmen on his multicolored works. Inspired by these works, Judd and Lehni embarked on another collaboration and created a furniture collection, comprising 15 objects made of powder-coated aluminium in 15 colours. Lehni remains the exclusive manufacture of Judd's metal furniture collection.

After Doris Lehni-Quarella's unexpected death in 1998, the leadership of Antonio Monaci and Benedetta Agostini led the company in the direction set by the previous generations of the Lehni family, safeguarding its artistic integrity and legacy. The exhibition 'JUDD, LEWITT AND BILL. MADE BY LEHNI' takes us through a century of collaborations at the intersection of material expertise, art and design, having worked with some of the most influential creative minds of modernism.

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Opening hours:

Tue – Fri, 10 am – 6 pm
Sat, 11 am – 5 pm

Caption and courtesy information:

Lehni Factory, Donald Judd Furniture, Dübendorf 2023
© Judd Foundation / 2024, ProLitteris, Zurich. Photo:
Antonio Monaci © Antonio Monaci/Lehni

Doris Lehni Quarella with Donald Judd, Zurich 1986 ©
Antonio Monaci/Lehni. Photo: Doris Lehni Quarella ©
Doris Lehni Quarella/Fotostiftung Schweiz

Max Bill, well-relief (Corrugated Relief), 1931–1932,
iron, synthetic resin varnish, 80 x 120 cm / 31 1/2 x 47
1/4 in © 2024, ProLitteris, Zurich. Collection of Angela
Thomas, Zumikon. Courtesy the max bill georges
vantongerloo foundation and Hauser & Wirth

Sol LeWitt, Structure, 1978 (executed by Lehni), metal,
59 x 116 x 59 cm / 23 1/4 x 45 5/8 x 23 1/4 in ©
The LeWitt Estate / 2024, ProLitteris, Zurich. Photo:
Doris Lehni Quarella, Doris Lehni Quarella/Fotostiftung
Schweiz.